



DIOCESE OF BRENTWOOD



Inspection Report

Name of School: St. Mary's Primary School
LEA: Waltham Forest
Inspection Date: 18th March 2015
Reporting Inspector: Pamela Brannigan

This Inspection was carried out under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of School: Primary
School Category: Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils: 4-11
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 218
Appropriate Authority: The Governing Body
Date of previous inspection: 22nd May 2009

School Address:
Station Road
Chingford
London
E4 7BJ

Tel. No. 020 8529 4723
Headteacher: Miss P. Egan
Chair of Governors: Mr P. Roe

Information about the school

St Mary's is a voluntary aided one form entry Catholic primary school in Chingford in the local authority of Waltham Forest and part of the diocese of Brentwood. The school serves the parish of St Teresa of Avila Chingford.. There are currently 218 pupils aged 4-11 on roll of whom 100% are Catholics. There is an above average number of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is above the national average. A small number of pupils are eligible for Pupil Premium funding.

Key grades for inspection

1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires Improvement 4: Unsatisfactory

Overall effectiveness of this Catholic school

Grade 1

St Mary's is an outstanding school with a Catholic ethos which permeates all areas. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual and moral development and the capacity for sustained improvement are excellent. Outcomes for pupils, the quality of teaching and the provision for Catholic education are also excellent. The experienced headteacher who is also subject leader for religious education has put in place a number of initiatives linked to teaching, learning, assessment and monitoring to move the school forward. She is very well supported in this by her senior leadership team. Pastoral care is excellent and shared by all members of the school community. Relationships are excellent and pupils feel well cared for and supported in their learning. Parents welcome the religious education in the school, appreciate the good communication with staff and the way the school keeps them informed. Pupils' standards of attainment are very good and by the end of Key Stage 2 often exceed diocesan expectations.

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

Grade 1

The school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and has put in place systems which ensure self-evaluation is accurate and rigorous. Since the last inspection in 2009 the school has embedded the new religious education programme 'Come and See' which, along with the revised Curriculum Directory for Religious Education has led to significant improvements in teaching and learning. Rigorous monitoring of teaching, planning and workbooks has led to better outcomes for all pupils. Tracking of pupil progress has ensured that groups who achieve less well are quickly identified and support strategies put in place. The school gives a high profile to religious education and has excellent systems in place to share good practice and support new teachers.

The senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for the Catholicity of the school and the central place of prayer, worship and religious education. Senior staff are very good role models and all teachers are given opportunities to extend their knowledge and improve their skills through in-service meetings and attendance at diocesan led training. Six teachers have the CCRS qualification and one is about to complete the course. The headteacher is in the process of completing an MA in Catholic Leadership which is having an impact on the life of the school.

The current leadership has an excellent capacity to maintain effectiveness. The headteacher shows outstanding leadership of a Catholic community through her focus on prayer and worship in which she is well supported by her staff. Her weekly meetings with groups of pupils ensure every child has an opportunity for a conversation with her about the way they experience school life. Governors have a wide range of expertise and many are involved in the life of the school. Systems are in place to develop and strengthen initiatives which lead to good outcomes for all pupils. The headteacher in her role as religious education subject leader is well placed to support colleagues and has attended diocesan training linked to religious education and Catholic life.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop links with other Catholic schools in the deanery for a planned programme of moderation of religious education outcomes and to share good practice.
- Establish a programme of annual retreat days for Year 6 pupils.
- Increase the number of bibles in Key Stage 2 to ensure each class has access to a complete set.

Outcomes for pupils

Grade 1

Pupils make an excellent contribution to the Catholic life of the school. They respond very well to opportunities to understand the needs of others in school and the wider community. Pupils are involved in the annual consideration of the school's mission statement, 'Love God, Love Others, Love Ourselves' which is well known by the whole community. They are keen to take on responsibilities including membership of the School Council, classroom helpers and playground buddies. Several local, national and international charities are supported over the years including 'Operation Smile', Save the Children and Anchor House, a local hostel which helps homeless people. Pupils also took the initiative in responding to the appeal for people affected by Typhoon Haiyan and raised over £1400 through their own efforts. Pupils show respect for adults and each other. Behaviour is excellent and pupils value the sense of community created within the school.

Opportunities for prayer and worship are wide ranging and frequent. Collective worship is intrinsic to the life of the school and is at the heart of every school celebration. School leaders ensure that the Church's liturgical year with its seasons and symbols are celebrated in a way appropriate for the understanding of the pupils. As a result pupils respond with respect and reverence to opportunities to develop their faith journey. There are daily assemblies which involve children in planning and leading worship. Pupils understand prayer as a time of reflection and are learning the traditional prayers of the Church. Older pupils are able to apply aspects of Jesus' life and teaching to their own lives. They know the importance of worship and are given opportunities to write their own prayers, many examples of which were seen during the inspection.

Pastoral care is excellent and given a high priority by staff and governors who work closely together to promote the spiritual development of pupils and the Catholic life of the community. Pupils feel safe, well cared for and know where to go when they need support. The 'Journey in Love' programme is used throughout the school and parents are invited to see the materials used. Pupils say they value being in a friendly environment where they are listened to and encouraged to help each other. Parents value the care given to their children, the quality of education and the approachability of staff. Brentwood Catholic Children's Society provides counselling for individual children and the Rainbows Bereavement programme is available for children who are experiencing grief, loss or separation from a loved one.

Attainment and progress in religious education are excellent. Lessons observed during the inspection were good or outstanding and pupils worked with interest. Behaviour for learning is excellent enabling pupils to make rapid and sustained progress. Pupils say they enjoy religious education and are eager to participate in the wide range of activities which form part of the lessons. They are keen to achieve well and opportunities to self and peer assess are leading to increased understanding of religious concepts. Pupils have a very good knowledge of the Catholic faith appropriate to their age and abilities. Workbooks are well presented, show progress year on year and indicate good coverage of the curriculum. Developmental marking lets pupils see the next steps in their learning and how to improve. By the end of Key Stage 2 standards of attainment often exceed diocesan expectations.

Leaders and managers

Grade 1

The headteacher supported by senior staff demonstrates excellent leadership of the school through the way she promotes the provision for the Catholic life of the school and brings about improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. She communicates a clear Catholic vision to the whole community which is affirmed by staff and governors who are all committed to providing the best possible environment for the pupils. She has developed a system of self-evaluation which is detailed, accurate and identifies areas for improvement. As subject leader she has a comprehensive knowledge

of areas for development in religious education and is well placed to support colleagues. Along with senior leaders she monitors religious education by means of lesson observations, work scrutiny and joint planning which is followed by feedback to individual teachers. There is currently a very strong focus on planning and assessment as the school embeds the revised Curriculum Directory for Religious Education by using the 'Come and See' programme. The school has put in place strategies to give further challenge to the ablest children as well as to support all groups. Staff development is very good and includes teaching assistants who play a key role in the school.

Governors work closely with senior leadership and have a very good understanding of strengths and areas for development. They are well informed about the life of the school through the headteacher's report and frequent monitoring visits. The parish priest who is link governor is familiar with assessment in religious education and comes in frequently to visit classrooms and act as an extra learning resource. Governors are closely involved in all aspects of the religious life of the school and are in a good position to help to shape its direction through challenge and support. They have engaged in diocesan training which has enabled them to evaluate provision and contribute to improvement.

Leaders ensure that the school is a welcoming community where everyone is respected and valued. Diversity is celebrated and pupils are taught to respect other faiths. Pupils' ethnic backgrounds are celebrated in 'Black History Month and International Week leading them to value their place and importance in their school and wider community. Pupils are given opportunities to develop a sense of service and show compassion for others through charitable fund raising. Provision for spiritual development ensures that pupils are able to reflect on their own lives and experiences in the light of faith. There are good links with the local community through sporting and music events. Parents are invited to many school events and are kept well informed about their children's welfare and progress. They appreciate the good level of contact with the school and the wide range of extra curricular clubs and activities which supports their children's interests.

Provision

Grade 1

Provision for prayer and worship at St Mary's is outstanding. Assemblies and liturgies are very well planned and contribute to pupils' spiritual development. They often include visual presentations, bible readings drama, singing and music. Pupils are involved in collective worship in their classrooms and are given opportunities for personal reflection and meditation. The headteacher leads a Rosary group for pupils in May and October which is very well attended. The environment is conducive to prayer and reflection with displays in the hall which emphasise the Catholic life of the school. A prayer garden is available for small groups and individual pupils to meditate and pray. Each classroom has an attractive prayer focus with religious artefacts and display boards which include children's work. Pupils help to plan, lead and contribute to the masses and age appropriate liturgies which are celebrated in school throughout the year. Parents, families and parishioners are invited to many celebrations and attendance is very good. The priest from St Teresa of Avila parish who is also link governor gives outstanding support by his visits every week and support for classroom religious education. He also supports the school through masses, liturgies and acts as chaplain on an informal basis. Pupils often visit the church for masses and parish links are excellent. Many pupils are involved at Sunday mass at St Teresa of Avila.

The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is excellent. During the inspection, lessons observed were good or outstanding. Lessons are planned with clear learning intentions and an interesting range of activities. The school has made an investment in new resources and pupils respond well and appreciate the wider range of activities to which this has given rise. In all classes observed pupils work very well and make very good progress. Teachers respond well to pupils' comments and take every opportunity to develop understanding. They have excellent subject knowledge and use a range of teaching styles and strategies to ensure all pupils are engaged and interested. Higher order questioning was a feature of outstanding lessons observed. Very good support by teaching assistants enables all groups of pupils to make progress. Marking is positive and includes suggestions of ways to improve. Very good assessment, planning and tracking supports the learning and progress of all groups of pupils.

The quality of the religious education curriculum is very good. At least 10% of curriculum time is devoted to religious education. The headteacher gives religious education a central place in the life of

the school and this is demonstrated by the budget devoted to it and the current review of resources. Religious education displays around the school emphasise the centrality of faith to the work of the community and the importance given to prayer and worship. The curriculum enables pupils to become aware of their responsibility for each other and their environment. It contributes very well to their spiritual and moral development. In addition pupils are taught about other faiths and visit local places of worship to extend their knowledge of the local community. The support given to families through after school clubs and many extra-curricular activities gives a strong sense of community to the school. There is every indication that current high standards are likely to be maintained or improved.

The inspector would like to express her thanks and appreciation to all members of the school community for their welcome and openness during the inspection.